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ANNOUNCEMENTS.

INAUGURAL MEETING OF LENT AND SUMMER TERM.

This Meeting will be held at the North Islington Public Library, Manor Gardens, Holloway Road, N., on Wednesday, January 11th, 1911, at 7.30 p.m. The Programme is as follows:—

A paper: "OURSELVES AND THE FUTURE," by **Mr. E. C. Wickens**, of the Liverpool Public Libraries, Hon. Secretary of the Liverpool and District Association of Assistant Librarians.

This will be followed by

A paper: "THE DEVELOPMENT OF NOTATION IN CLASSIFICATION," by **Mr. H. Rutherford Purnell**, of the Croydon Public Libraries, Hon. Editor of "The Library Assistant."

The chair will be occupied by **Mr. James Duff Brown**, Borough Librarian of Islington. Light Refreshments will be served prior to the Meeting.

It is several years since the Association has had the privilege of meeting at this Library, and many will be glad, no doubt, of an opportunity for renewing acquaintance with its interesting features. It will, further, be a pleasure to welcome our colleague from Liverpool; he is an enthusiast both in Library work and Association work; his subject is one which promises well for discussion, so there is every reason to expect an interesting and instructive evening. The reading of Mr. Purnell's paper will take place on this occasion owing to the alteration in the programme of the February meeting, an announcement of which is given below.

Routes:—Moorgate Street (Finsbury Park Tube) to Highbury; Stations on the South London Tube Railway to Highbury, changing at Moorgate Street; Stations on the North London Railway to Highbury; Piccadilly and Brompton Tube to Holloway Road; thence by L.C.C. cars (Highgate) to Holloway Empire. Also stations on the Great Eastern and Midland Railways to Upper Holloway, 10 minutes' walk to Manor Gardens, or by cars going Citywards.

FEBRUARY MEETING.—PRELIMINARY ANNOUNCEMENT.

An alteration has been effected in the programme of the February Meeting which will be held in the London Library, St James' Square, S.W. on Wednesday, the 8th. **C. T. Hagberg Wright, Esq., LL.D.**, the

Chief Librarian, by whose kind invitation the Meeting is being held, will read a paper on "EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY READERS, AND THE ORIGIN OF THE LONDON LIBRARY." Refreshments will be provided, and there will be every opportunity of viewing this, the second largest of the Libraries of the Metropolis. Full details will be published in the February number of the Journal.

LECTURES IN BIBLIOGRAPHY.

A course of fifteen lectures on "BIBLIOGRAPHY IN THE REFERENCE LIBRARY: BEING A GUIDE TO BIBLIOGRAPHICAL RESEARCH," is announced to be given by Mr. R. A. Peddie in the Lecture Room at the British Museum, on Wednesdays, commencing January 18th, 1911, at 3 o'clock p.m.

The syllabus is as follows:—January 18th, General introduction; January 25th, February 1st, National bibliographies; February 8th, 15th, 22nd, March 1st, 8th, 15th, 22nd, 29th, Subject bibliographies: Introduction, Philosophy; Religion; Sociology; Natural Science, Useful Arts; Fine Arts; Literature and Philology; History; Biography; April 5th, Indexes, etc.; April 12th, 19th, Methods of Research in the Reading Room of the British Museum; April 26th, Research Work in Other London Libraries.

During each lecture the books referred to will be available in the Lecture Room. Tickets for the course are one guinea, or to library assistants and other students attending the classes of the Library Association, half a guinea, and may be obtained from Mr. R. A. Peddie, 36, St. Martin's Court, St. Martin's Lane, W.C.

MIDLAND BRANCH.

The first Annual Meeting will be held on Thursday, January 5th, at the Birmingham University (Edmund Street Buildings), by kind permission of the University Council. During the afternoon a visit will be made to the New Buildings, and members will have the privilege of inspecting the valuable and unique University Library. The meeting will be continued after tea, when, in addition to the transacting of formal business, including the election of officers and committee, Mr. A. Capel Shaw, City Librarian, Birmingham, is expected to give an address. A detailed programme will be sent to members by post.

NORTH EASTERN BRANCH.

The next meeting will be held at South Shields on Wednesday, January 18th, 1911. The proceedings will be held in the Y.M.C.A. Reading Room, Fowler Street. Programme:—

3.30 p.m. Meeting of Committee.

4.0 p.m. General Meeting:—

Papers: "Victor Hugo," by Mr. Ernest Bailey, Chief Librarian, South Shields.

"Library Bulletins," by Mr. Harry Fostall, West Branch Library, Sunderland.

At the conclusion of the meeting the members will be entertained to tea by Mr. Bailey, who has also kindly promised to arrange a concert for the evening.

EDITORIAL.

The New Year and the Old.—Our best wishes are accorded to every member of the Association, and to all who love books and have at heart the interests of the library profession. As the year just ended was one of the fullest we have had, and saw the beginning of new work entered

upon with enthusiasm, so we look forward to an increased accomplishment in the year just beginning. It is one of our greatest encouragements that our Association is being received with favour and welcomed into the most important fields of library activity, and each year seems to open up a widening field which must ultimately prove its force both to ourselves and to library work. The past year saw the Association for the first time at the Board of Education; it saw a meeting of Library Assistants in the Midlands from widely removed parts of England; an Annual Meeting attended by representatives from all over the country, which although disappointed by both the speakers, yet proving in our own hands of the greatest interest and helpfulness; it saw also meetings under the auspices of the Law Society and the Worshipful Company of Cutlers. These are only a few outstanding features of the year's work.

The coming year is full of hope for an extension of work and privilege. There are meetings already announced in places never before visited; we expect a most successful meeting at Brussels at Easter; we look forward to further inter-branch meetings; there is the expectation of our Report on Conditions of Library Work; and the Annual Meeting is likely to include, among other representatives from distant parts of the country, a visit from Mr. Thomas Coulson, Chairman of the Irish Branch. Before dealing separately with the work of the Branches we should like to express our pleasure at the harmony that exists throughout the whole of our Association. Although the Branches are separate Societies, each with its own constitution, they are so working together in unison with the Central Association as to form at the same time integral parts of one national body. To this unity of work is due our freedom from the old criticism to which we used to be subject condemning our "youthful enthusiasm." The very enthusiasm has carried us beyond it, because it has been accompanied by work. We hope that the unity will long continue, and that it will extend, so as to bring other assistant librarians, many of whom are already grouped in independent societies, in some cases of considerable size, into touch with each other throughout the Kingdom, all working together for improving their position as men of sound business training, and as scholars capable of carrying on the educational work, which is the chief aim towards which libraries are working.

Our Branch Associations. During the year we saw the beginning of the MIDLAND BRANCH, a small body it is true, but one animated by the best spirit. Already some

good meetings have been held, at which excellent papers have been read; but perhaps the best work done has been the advocacy of the needs of Midland assistants in regard to professional instruction. It persuaded the Birmingham and District Library Association to join with it in forming a Committee to consider these needs; and we rejoice to say that, as a result, it has been decided to provide classes in classification, cataloguing, and perhaps, practical bibliography. We hope that a full measure of support will be accorded to the classes. A revival of effort is to be remarked in the IRISH BRANCH, and we watch the efforts of our colleagues with profound interest. There are new officers this year, and the attendances at the meetings, when the size of the Branch is considered, are highly creditable. The debates are excellently carried on, the new prizes for the Associate best in debate already producing keen competition. The Committee of the Branch hopes to offer further prizes to its members. The second year in the life of an association is always critical, because its mere novelty has disappeared. It is especially pleasant to note how triumphantly the NORTH EASTERN BRANCH has survived the critical time. Its membership has increased, its enthusiasm is as active as ever, and it certainly has attracted the best of the coming members in the Profession in its area. Our readers need not be reminded of the excellence of its discussions, and of the excellent way in which they are reported. The Branch is developing the social functions which have had such a cohering effect in the Yorkshire Branch. The Officers and Committee are to be congratulated. Our largest, the YORKSHIRE BRANCH, is no less active. Yorkshire folk are proverbially energetic, and if few reports of the meetings have appeared in these pages it is because there are limits even to the energetic. We should like to receive more reports, but we can assure our readers that meetings are held and vigorously carried through. Our Vice-President still retains the chairmanship of the Branch, and the work of the Officers and Committee is really a valuable feature of our organisation. We need not say much of the SOUTH WALES BRANCH, except that it flourishes, and is an undoubted power for good. It has had a successful year, on which we congratulate it and ourselves. Individually and collectively the Branches exert a large influence for good, and we look forward to ever-extending activities, and increasing coherence and fellowship throughout all parts of this growing organism.

The Presidential Visit to the Provinces. The Annual

Meeting of the Yorkshire Branch takes place at Leeds on January 12th. The Council will be represented by the President (Mr. W. C. Berwick Sayers), who in former years has addressed Branch meetings at Leeds, Newcastle, Cardiff, and Birmingham, and by Mr. James Douglas Stewart, of the Islington Public Libraries. These gentlemen will also be present at the meeting of the Liverpool and District Association of Assistant Librarians at St. Helens, on January 13th.

Mr. G. H. McCall's Appointment. The news of Mr. G. H. McCall's decision to devote his attention to an artistic career, an announcement of which will be found on another page, will not come as a surprise, because his exceptional abilities are well known to the members of this Association. We are indebted to him for the pleasant designs that for several years adorned the covers of the Journal. He has also an aptitude for the design of excellent book-plates, examples of which have been brought to our notice from time to time. In addition to the practical evidences of his interest in the Association, of which Mr. McCall has been a Member almost from the beginning, he has in other ways endeared himself to our members, and, while bidding him good-bye with sincere regret, we have much pleasure in wishing him every success in his new sphere. We are sure that he will retain an interest in the work of the colleagues whom he is leaving; and as sure that his work will be watched with interest by his well-wishers, the Members of the Library Assistants' Association.

A Library Prophet. A genius has appeared with prophecies glorious to hear. He modestly sets forth an announcement of his gospel on a postcard with manuscript exclamations, including such terms as "useful to Library Committees," "Larger salaries for librarians," etc., and informs us that it materialises in a work entitled "Public Library Reform," of which he tells us, with consistent restraint, that: "The publication of this book marks the dawn of a new and brighter era for Public Libraries, Librarians, and Library Assistants. The book presents the case for Public Library Reform, and is the outcome of 23 years' practical experience. It also emphasises the necessity for the appointment of a Royal Commission to enquire into and report upon the work of the Public Library System, and contains the draft of a new Act relating to Public Libraries, Museums and Art Galleries. In short, the book is the long-awaited *Charter* for Public Libraries, Librarians and Library Assistants." Such eloquence is convincing;

we must economise and save the cost of a copy, "5/3 net, post free. *Cash with order.*" If the style of the book equals the postcard, then is the millenium near, and already we have visions of library assistants in fur-lined coats. The name of the prophet is Mr. William Weare.

A Retrograde Step. We regret to learn that Lewisham has followed the unfortunate example set by West Ham and Camberwell in abolishing the office of Chief Librarian, and has made the individual librarians directly responsible to the Libraries' Committee. The result is a system of branch libraries without a director or any co-ordinating force. It follows that each district librarian in proportion to his energy must vary and complicate without necessarily improving the libraries' service. In the result each library is starved, the status of the staff is lowered, a needless duplicating of work occurs, and real economy vanishes. £200 per annum is saved, but we feel sure that the system will be £1000 worse. We sympathise with our Lewisham colleagues in their misfortune caused by this short-sighted step of the library authority.

REPORT ON THE LIBRARY CONFERENCE IN BRUSSELS, AUGUST, 1910.*

By HENRY VAUX HOPWOOD, F.L.A., of the Patent Office Library.

If the word "Report" be taken in its literal sense, my remarks must depart somewhat from the title of my paper. A member of your Council, Miss Clarke, has given an admirable account of the actual happenings at Brussels in the pages of the October and November "Library World," and those of you who see the "Library Journal" will have read therein the impressions of our United States colleagues. My object, then, to-night is to give, if I can, some glance into the future, to indicate to you the forces which seem to be at work, and to point out the directions in which interest on your part may be desirable.

Firstly, as to the "Library Congress," which I suppose you all consider to be the more closely allied with your present work and conditions. In the past an International Congress may have done good work in stimulating interest, but it was, after all, only an opportunity for the exchange of views between librarians coming from all parts of the world, and working under widely varying conditions. This, indeed,

*Paper read before the Library Assistants' Association at the Bermondsey Public Library, on December 14th, 1910.

the recent Congress also was, but with an important addition. The Congress has become permanent; a committee has been appointed to carry out its resolutions so far as possible, and to arrange time, place, and agenda for the succeeding Congress. Thus while the Organising Committee of the Brussels Congress placed all questions sent in on the list, except where they concerned one country only, and also accepted reports on all questions, the Permanent Committee has a fairly defined programme before it. Absence of response showed some questions to be devoid of interest, others of a minor nature found their own solution in discussion. But certain matters stood out as of world-wide importance, and it is of them that we shall hear more in the coming years. In some of them, England has already taken the lead, in many others she has much to do if she is to keep abreast with practice in other countries. Secondly, the position is somewhat the same as regards the Congress of Bibliography, the scope of which was very wide. This also is rendered permanent, but all its ultimate aims have been embodied in a "Code" which I hope to translate. The work therein outlined is enormous, but the plan is so conceived that even individual work may assist in forwarding the final result. And now, with your permission, I shall make no distinction between one congress and the other, for this evening I propose to speak only of tendencies.

In the first place we find a distinct movement towards the encouragement of Government action in many matters concerning libraries. Putting aside the very large question of an International Convention between the Powers, with a view to the establishment of National Offices of Bibliography in all countries there is a well marked desire for the issue of copyright lists which shall be bibliographically correct, and also the extension of international exchange. These matters, of course, are mainly of interest to large reference libraries, but it seems to be generally recognised that they can only be dealt with by Government. The second feature is the large degree in which methods involving international agreement, but maintaining national freedom as to methods, have been adopted. I should like to dwell on this point, as it is important. There has always seemed to be some objection to International action, based mainly on the fear of International control. How unfounded this idea is may be seen from the scheme adopted for the evolution of an International Cataloguing Code for Author Catalogues. As you know, the English-speaking librarians have compiled the Anglo-American code. In the same way the librarians

of other languages will each compile their own, and when this is done, and not till then, will the International Committee commence its work. Rules which agree in all languages will obviously be International, in cases of non-agreement the more popular formula may be adopted with explanation of the reasons for varying practice in different countries. Thus every librarian may follow his national code, with a full understanding of the system in vogue in other lands, and slowly but surely an advance will be made towards greater uniformity. I take this as an example of what seemed to me to be a pervading sentiment throughout the Congresses, a desire to ascertain points of agreement so that they might be established, and to explain differences and their causes with a view to the retention of necessary national and special practices. Here I may quote a suggestion, which exhibits the same spirit; the suggestion that we should compile a standard terminology and list of abbreviations in all languages. Obviously the first thing to do is to understand one another, yet it is not always easy to comprehend expressions used in foreign literature which deals with our own profession. Indeed, we are not quite clear among ourselves always—I fancy some of us use the term "cross-reference" in more than one sense.

Some few other matters of interest may be mentioned, among which professional education is perhaps the most important. As you know, professional education in library economy is practically unorganised on the continent, and where it does exist it partakes more of the nature of training as an Archivist. The Congress resolved that education in Librarianship was necessary in all countries, and declared either a system of library schools or the grant of Diplomas under a syllabus approved by the National Association of Librarians to be a satisfactory system. As the latter is our method we may feel content, for the majority of countries are more likely to adopt the class system than the school. Again, in all matters touching Public Library work, in our municipal sense, we occupy a medium position. Without claiming, for a moment, that our system, or want of it, is perfect, it is very certain that our administration and practice are good, and that we are capable of attaining comparatively large results with a comparatively small expenditure. It is also certain that as public, or so-called popular, library work is gradually taken up on the Continent it will have to be carried on very economically, even more economically than with us. Considering our close proximity, and our methods of work, it seems reasonable to

suppose that our practice will have a considerable influence on library development in countries other than our own. As a contrast, let us give a little consideration to one matter in which we are likely to be drawn forward by continental example. I refer to the question of records. I know that as a profession we do take a great interest in local history; papers read before this and the Library Association show it, and we all know that the local collection is a feature of numberless municipal libraries. Yet this interesting work has not been undertaken as part of an organised system; it was interesting work, work that needed doing, and many librarians have naturally assumed it as part of their normal functions. But in many other countries the profession of Archivist or Record-Keeper exists, and in the absence of local librarians the members of that profession are the local historians. As a Royal Commission has just been appointed in England to enquire into Public Records and their custody, and is empowered to report on the education necessary for Record-Keepers, you will see that the present position in this country is liable to undergo changes which may affect, favourably or unfavourably, the British Library Profession.

In conclusion, I do not think that the Brussels Congresses will have any great material influence on the English Public Librarian in the immediate future. Yet tendencies exist, and it was of them that I promised to speak. It will be some years before their influence is widely felt, and it is dangerous to prophecy, even when you think you know. But I do certainly look for an increased Governmental interest in libraries and bibliography here and abroad. I do foresee an increase in co-operative work, especially in the latter sphere. I think it likely that continental education will, in the first place, provide for the training of librarians mainly of the reference kind, and that ultimately as they extend to the popular we may modify slightly in their direction, and in that of the record-keeper too. Consequently, I hope that as the years go by we shall strive for a closer understanding and more intimate working between the public library and the large reference and specialist libraries of this country, and, together with other countries, work for bibliographical ends. I hope that personal friendships will increase between English and foreign librarians, that we shall see attendance frequent at each other's meetings, and perhaps even develop a system of exchange of duty. It is not unknown that foreign students should come here to work awhile, the future may show us some advantage in a like course. And now, I

expect you will think my paper vague. That, of course, is its beauty. I do not offer you any great material advantage, I hope I have held out something better. To increase one's circle, to understand the cause and effect of widely-varying circumstances, possibly to help, if only a little, in a world movement; all these things assist us indirectly in our work. The larger outlook always tells. And if I ask you to cultivate somewhat of the spirit of true internationalism, it is because I believe that that spirit, in our work as in other spheres, is a power for good.

THE INFORMATION BUREAU: AN UNDEVELOPED POSSIBILITY.*

By F. J. PATRICK, of the Birmingham Public Library,
Reference Department.

One of the most striking features of these modern days of hustle is the importance of organisation as a factor in the success of all enterprises, be they industrial, educational, scientific, or what not. The arrangement of all available material in such a manner as to secure the greatest possible utility with a minimum expenditure of time, is the all-important consideration of to-day, and, as we well know, its influence is felt in the public library just as it is in the workshop or office. Research work and assistance to readers generally, although a matter which vitally concerns the public whom we serve, is an unsatisfactory matter in the majority of English public libraries to-day, despite the fact that it could be made our most convincing weapon in demonstrating the practical value of libraries. It is here that we can, to put the matter concisely, give the public real usefulness for their money. This is a very mercenary recommendation, but it is, perhaps, the most weighty which can be brought forward in these very mercenary days.

By the establishment of an information bureau in a library, research work could be organised and its value to the public and the library increased. In the majority of our libraries this work is done in a haphazard fashion, and the advantages gained by it are not what they should be. The process may be briefly outlined as follows. A reader requires certain information which an assistant, after a more or less lengthy search, finds for him. The reader is helped and the assistant will be saved the trouble of a search should he be asked for the same information again, provided

*Associate's paper read before the Library Assistants' Association, Midland Branch, at the Aston Meeting, November 17th, 1910.

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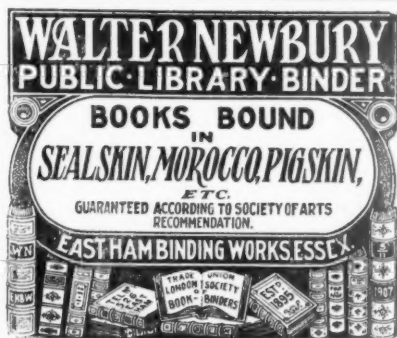
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AN INVITATION.

The LIBRARY ASSISTANTS' ASSOCIATION exists to promote all objects that make for the social and professional betterment of Library Assistants. Few things are more calculated to sustain that aim than the projected

Easter Excursion and School at Brussels, 1911.

There will be Lectures by Mr. H. V. HOPWOOD, F.L.A. (Examiner in Classification to the Library Association) at the Brussels Institute of Bibliography, on the work of this most important organisation; there will be opportunities of seeing fine libraries, and of exchanging views with French and German Assistants; and Brussels is a fine centre for excursions to the Field of Waterloo, the beautiful mediaeval City of Bruges, as well as Ghent, and Antwerp, and Ostend.

The Excursion will extend from Thursday night, when London is left, until the Monday night. The expenses are to be kept to the minimum, and should not exceed £3.

Already enough members (ladies and gentlemen) have intimated their intention of joining the party to secure its success. It is necessary to make arrangements early, and those intending to join should write as soon as possible to Mr. H. V. Hopwood, Ravenswing, Rookwood Road, Stamford Hill, London, N

NOW READY.

A

Summary of the Law Relating to Public Libraries in England and Wales, Scotland & Ireland.

By H. W. FOVARGUE,

Town Clerk, Eastbourne, and
Honorary Solicitor to the Library Association.

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that he remembers where he found it, which he may not do. Here the matter ends. Another reader might require the same information next day, but unless he happened to apply to the same assistant, the whole process would have to be repeated. This unnecessary expenditure of the time of both reader and assistant would be avoided if all research work were done at an information bureau and the results of searches recorded. The primary object of an information bureau, therefore, would be the organisation of research work. The bureau would be provided with a card cabinet, sheaf, or any other form of record, in which insertions could be made at any point, and in this would be permanently preserved in an easily accessible manner the results of all searches made. With such a record no search would need to be made twice, and in time a valuable store of information would accumulate which should prove of great service in answering the more difficult enquiries made by readers, and save a considerable amount of time and trouble for both staff and public.

This, the primary object of the bureau, is only a fraction of the work which it might accomplish however, for, in addition to unearthing information required, the assistant in charge could record information likely to be asked for. In fact, a whole field of operations would be opened up, by the working of which it would be possible to render resources of the library available which otherwise would scarcely ever be drawn upon owing to their inaccessibility. Take, for instance, volumes of miscellaneous essays. Almost all of them contain useful contributions to thought and knowledge, but in order that they may be of the greatest possible service, the subject matter of each separate essay must be accessible. In other words, an index of the essays must be compiled. An information bureau at which this work was done would place at the disposal of readers a large amount of literature on obscure topics, the existence of which would otherwise remain undiscovered in the majority of cases. The titles of the volumes are hardly ever any guide to their contents, unless in a very general way, and such an index becomes a necessity if the best use is to be made of these books. In fact it is obvious that all informative books of a miscellaneous character, excepting, of course, purely quick-reference works, must be treated in this way if they are to be of the greatest possible service. Again, take the case of illustrations. Miscellaneous collections of reproductions of pictures, out-of-the-way crests and coats-of-arms, portraits, maps, views and other forms of illustrations, all of which

would often be of use if one only knew exactly where to find them, could be made accessible by means of the information bureau. Needless to say, the bureau would not go over ground which has already been covered by a published guide, like the "A.L.A. Portrait Index." Its object would be to record the whereabouts of, and thus render available, all useful information which would be likely to be overlooked when wanted, on account of the absence of any indication of its existence, and to which there is no other guide.

Another useful duty which could be performed at the information bureau would be the indexing of useful periodical articles immediately upon the receipt of the periodicals containing them. This would be especially useful in the case of scientific, professional and trade articles. Such articles are constantly supplementing the text books on the subjects of which they treat, and it is essential that they should be available for students of those subjects. Important political, historical and literary articles would, of course, be equally worthy of indexing. Such an index would open up a large store of information on topics of the day just at the time when they were of most use, and would greatly add to the usefulness of the periodicals treated. The process would naturally be confined to the more serious periodicals, but the popular magazines of a miscellaneous character would be worth while scanning as they often contain useful informative articles. This index would be kept separately from, but uniform with, the information record proper, and its size would be kept within certain limits, because, in the course of time, the older articles would be made accessible by the appearance of such publications as "Poole's Index" and their cards or slips could be withdrawn. Before discarding any, however, it would be well to ascertain that they actually appeared in such publications, and, if any were found to be omitted, they could be inserted in the general record of the bureau. A further accessory of the information bureau would be acquired by clipping from the newspapers and illustrated weeklies, articles, paragraphs and illustrations of local interest, or bearing upon important topics of the day. These clippings would be placed in envelopes, each having the subject clearly marked on the outside, which would then be arranged alphabetically or in classified order, in cabinets or other convenient receptacles. It would then be possible to hand a reader, immediately on application, an envelope containing cuttings on the topic in which he was interested. An index

to the whole would greatly add to the value of the collection. The necessity for the preservation of clippings on topics of the day would afterwards be diminished by the appearance of the Times Index, but the local clippings, consisting of biographical notices of local celebrities, paragraphs and articles on local history, topography, etc., would form an addition to the library of great value and importance, containing much information likely to be accessible in no other form.

From what has here been suggested as to the work which might be accomplished at the information bureau, it will be obvious that its function should be to supply what is required in order to enable the greatest possible use to be made of the materials which the library contains, care always being taken not to duplicate work which has already been done in any other form. In addition to the aids mentioned, which would grow up with the bureau as it were, it is hardly necessary to state that all of the various printed indexes and bibliographical aids in the library would be kept at the bureau for the use of the assistant in charge. The quick reference works also, to which he would constantly have occasion to refer enquirers, would be near at hand. The position of the bureau would necessarily depend upon the arrangement of the library building, but it is desirable that it should be near the entrance so as to catch the eye of all persons entering, and also to the reference library as it will naturally be there that most of the enquirers will have to go for the books or periodicals to which they are referred. It is hardly necessary to mention that notices should call attention to the bureau, and that every available means of making its existence known outside the library should be utilised. It may here be mentioned that there is no reason why the work of an information bureau should be confined to the reference library only, but that it should be a key to all the departments of the library, as far as might be useful. The usefulness of the bureau would be greatly augmented if enquiries could be made and answered by telephone. It would be a special boon to business men.

Undoubtedly, the most important factor upon which the success of an information bureau would depend, would be the assistant in charge. The queries propounded to him in a day would be numerous and varied, and it would be necessary to satisfy every enquirer. That is to say, if the bureau could not furnish what was required, the assistant should, at least, have convinced the reader that the utmost had been done, and the failure to produce the desired information was not due to the faulty organisation of the bureau,

or his own incompetence. He would have to be thoroughly familiar with the contents of all the quick reference works, including encyclopaedias, annuals, and dictionaries of various kinds, directories, gazetteers, etc., and know the strong points of each. A knowledge of the arrangement and scope of the various indexes and other bibliographical aids in existence would be necessary, and an acquaintance with the more important parliamentary reports and papers would also prove valuable, especially of the various statistical returns which are published periodically. But above all, he would be required to possess an aptitude for tracking down evasive pieces of information, such as could only be acquired by long practice, combined with a knowledge like that which has been outlined. Last, but by no means least in importance, he would need to be courteous and tactful in dealing with enquirers, so as to ascertain the exact requirements of enquirers at the library counter, many of whom seem possessed with a desire to conceal the nature of the information of which they are in search, with the result that their enquiries are very roundabout and indefinite. The qualifications of an information bureau assistant may be briefly summarised as including the possession of wide bibliographical knowledge, experience in research work and tact in dealing with enquirers.

As to the policy to be observed in working the bureau: it should not be the aim of the assistant in charge to place before a reader the book giving the information required, opened at the exact page where this is to be found, but rather to show him the best method of searching for such information by indicating any work of reference likely to be of use, or drawing attention to, and, if necessary, explaining the use of, the catalogue or any other aid which might be of assistance. Otherwise, the bureau would have the undesirable effect of tending to make readers lazy instead of teaching them how to help themselves. It would be desirable that as many members of the library staff as possible should take their turns at information bureau work, to avoid the apathy in the matter of assistance to readers that would be produced by the concentration of the work on one assistant. Such a practice would also prove valuable in case of the absence of the regular assistant. The time of the assistant in charge should not be occupied in answering enquiries which might easily be answered by means of clearly worded notices displayed in prominent positions. By these are meant enquiries as to the conditions under which books may be borrowed, and, in general, all enquiries likely to be

made by persons unfamiliar with the methods of procedure in a public library. If a person, after reading such notices, appeared to be in doubt upon any point, it would then be time for the information bureau assistant to ascertain the difficulty and clear up any misunderstanding which might exist in the mind of the would-be reader.

Among the advantages obtainable from the bureau it will be seen that the weak spots of a library would be forced into prominence by the inability of the bureau to furnish certain information asked for, and opportunity would thus be afforded for filling up gaps, the existence of which might otherwise have passed unnoticed. As far as the public are concerned, they would have at their disposal the whole contents of the library in a far truer sense than before the introduction of the bureau, and there would be few topics upon which a library of fair size, provided with such an aid, could not supply some information. Readers would have at their call a trained assistant, fully qualified to assist them in any difficulty, and supplied with all the necessary bibliographical tools for the purpose, thus being enabled to ascertain whatever they required to know, as speedily as possible. To quote our honorary secretary, "By organisation much of the time now frequently spent on research work for readers would be saved, while others would be encouraged to use the library as a place where knowledge and information are freely dispensed."

The upkeep of such a bureau as here outlined should not prove to be an expensive matter. The necessity for the provision of an information bureau only exists in the larger libraries, although the smaller ones might well undertake some of the work suggested, without actually providing a bureau with an assistant always in charge. In the larger libraries the provision of an assistant to answer all enquiries and assist readers, would make a reduction of the ordinary counter staff possible, which, added to the amount of staff time which the bureau would save in research work, would probably more than counterbalance the salary of the assistant. In some libraries, perhaps, an assistant would only be required at certain busy times during the day, and at other times enquirers could summon an assistant by means of an electric bell at the bureau. Other expenditure besides that involved in providing an assistant, would be chiefly on stationery, such as cards, &c., for indexing, but this would be comparatively trifling compared with its usefulness. As far as I am aware, no public library in the British Isles has attempted thoroughly to organise its undeveloped

resources as suggested in this paper. Useful work in the way of systematising assistance to readers has been accomplished in one or two of our libraries, but, even in these cases, the information bureau is still an undeveloped possibility. In conclusion, it may be fairly claimed that the information bureau could be made to fill an important gap in the organisation of our libraries, and, by making them of greater use to the community, go far towards securing for them that place as educational institutions which we all desire that they should occupy.

PROCEEDINGS.

DECEMBER MEETING.

The third meeting of the Session was held at the Bermondsey Public Library on Wednesday, December 14th, 1910, by invitation of Mr. FROWDE, the Chief Librarian. As in the case of the Chelsea meeting, this was the Association's first visit to Bermondsey. It was marked by extremely wet weather, which no doubt accounted for the falling off in attendance, but there was a full programme provided for the members who were present. Before the proceedings began there was opportunity for an inspection of the Library building. At about eight o'clock the Chairman of the Libraries' Committee, Mr. ALDERMAN HENRY HARBORD took the Chair, and after the minutes of the previous meeting had been read by the Honorary Secretary, said that on behalf of the Libraries' Committee he had much pleasure in seeing the Association at Bermondsey. Libraries had a great fascination for him, and he believed in their usefulness. Although they were very ancient institutions we were only within recent times taking to them. He then called upon Mr. H. V. Hopwood to read his "Report on the Library Conference at Brussels, 1910," which appears on p. 6. Little time was left for discussion, but Mr. J. D. STEWART (Islington) congratulated Mr. Hopwood on his paper, particularly for its condensation of the tendencies of the Conference rather than a report on the actual proceedings. He referred to the desirability of an international cataloguing code, and expressed a hope that the conference would have effect in pressing home to the Government the necessity of a Copyright Office for the publication of an official list of English publications. Then began a series of debates opened by Miss H. A. FUNNELL on the subject "Is it desirable that new appointments should be made only from amongst those who have passed the Oxford or Cambridge Local, or their equivalents," which was

negated by Miss R. L. DUMENIL, and discussed at some length. Mr. W. B. THORNE (Poplar) followed with the reading of a paper by Mr. CHARLES SEXTON, of Cardiff, on the question, "Is it desirable to introduce a system of apprenticeship into the Library Profession." Mr. W. GEO. CHAMBERS took the contrary view, and there was a good discussion, in which Mr. FROWDE took part. The third debate was on the question, "Seeing that the majority of standard juvenile books were written for adult readers, should not children be encouraged to read the literature provided for adults?" Mr. JAMES D. YOUNG (Greenwich) spoke in its favour, and Mr. JAMES D. STEWART (Islington) against. After the discussion Mr. R. COOPER (Battersea) dealt with the affirmative view of the question, "Can borrowers' guarantees be dispensed with?" which Mr. C. A. HARRIS (Deptford) opposed. At the conclusion of this debate a vote of thanks was moved to the readers of the papers by Miss OLIVE E. CLARKE (Islington), seconded by Mr. H. R. PURNELL (Croydon), and carried with enthusiasm. Then followed a vote of thanks to the Chairman moved by the Honorary Secretary (Mr. H. T. Coutts), and seconded by Mr. G. R. Bolton; and one to Mr. and Mrs. Frowde, both of which were carried unanimously, and with applause. The meeting next adjourned for refreshments, very kindly provided by Mr. and Mrs. Frowde, which formed a very enjoyable conclusion to a most interesting meeting.

MIDLAND BRANCH—REPORT OF NOVEMBER MEETING.

On November 17th members of the Midland Branch held a most interesting and successful meeting at Aston Manor. Through the kind arrangement of Mr. R. K. Dent, the Aston Librarian, the party visited Oscott R.C. College during the afternoon. The Rector not only gave special permission for the visit but arranged for the party to be conducted over the seminary by one of the clergy, whose explanations of the many rare and costly exhibits of books, MSS., and curios, added much to the pleasure of the visit. The library, which is one of the finest of its kind in the country, and contains several thousand volumes and MSS. was particularly admired. The party returned to Aston for tea which was served in the Council Chamber. After tea Mr. Dent exhibited some of the Aston Library's treasures, wherein it is rich, and his most entertaining remarks respecting the exhibition were thoroughly enjoyed and appreciated.

The business meeting followed. MR. F. J. PATRICK gave his paper on "The Information Bureau, an Undeveloped Possibility," which is printed on page 10 of this issue. In the discussion that followed some interesting points were raised. MR. NEWELL opened by strongly opposing the telephone enquiry section of a Bureau. He said that before long it would result in so many enquiries for addresses of persons and firms, that Kelly's Directories Ltd. would be down on the Library Committee for loss of trade. MR. PEPPIETTE thought there was a danger lest by over indexing of information the library assistant's education became neglected, and he became merely a machine. MR. DIXON pointed out that as only a few libraries filed all the best periodicals it would be useless for the small library to index them all. MR. OWEN suggested that a full index could be made by the larger libraries, such as the county town libraries, who would supply copies of it to the other libraries in the county or district. If the information indexed were not available at the small library, it would be quite safe to refer the enquirer to the larger library which issued the index. "For instance," he said, "We at Coventry often refer readers to the Birmingham Reference Library to consult works which we haven't got but which we know to be there." Mr. Patrick then replied.

MR. HORACE DIXON, Erdington Public Library, followed with a valuable paper on "School Libraries." He advocated the adoption of a School Library System in all urban and country districts, urging the necessity of placing children in these districts in touch with books for home reading. He quoted the Minister of Education respecting the system of School Libraries at Cumberland in support of his arguments. Considerable discussion followed, in which it is interesting to note, everyone present took part. Several assistants shared the view that libraries for children were better under the supervision of the teachers who had the advantage over the librarian in personal acquaintance of each individual reader. The meeting terminated after hearty votes of thanks were passed to Mr. Dent and Mr. Newell for arranging the meeting, to Messrs. Patrick and Dixon for their papers, and to the Rector of Oscott College.

NORTH EASTERN BRANCH.

On Wednesday, November 30th, a Whist Drive was held in the Lecture Hall of the Carnegie Branch Library, Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Upwards of sixty members and friends were present, and a very enjoyable evening was spent. Play commenced at 8 o'clock, and continued, with

an interval of half-an-hour for supper, until 11. The prizes, five in number, were then presented to the respective winners by Mrs. Walton. The room was very tastefully decorated with plants, etc., and thanks are due to Miss Brooks, Miss Evers, and other members of the Branch Libraries' staff for so kindly undertaking this work.

SOUTH WALES BRANCH.

The November meeting was held at the Central Library, Cardiff, on November 23rd, when Mr. Harry Farr, the City Librarian, gave a very interesting and instructive address on the Librarians' Conference at Brussels in 1910. The Chairman (Mr. W. Morgan) in his opening remarks, said that the members were honoured by Mr. Farr's presence among them. They also highly appreciated the continued interest which he took in the Branch. Particulars were given of the various prize schemes, and also of the proposed holiday school at Brussels next Easter. The opening part of Mr. Farr's paper dealt with the growth of international meetings of librarians and their value for the interchange of ideas. He remarked that at international meetings one met with entirely new ideas, and in proof of this, pointed out the difference that exists between British and foreign libraries and librarians. Mr. Farr then went on to explain the separate sections of the conference, and gave the decisions arrived at, and in not a few cases, a resumé of the more important papers, many of which were of great interest. Among the subjects dealt with were superannuation for librarians, national bibliographies, libraries as repositories for public documents, international exchanges, etc. A general plan of the exhibition was shown, and the bibliographical sections were fully described. The speaker had an intimate knowledge of Brussels, and thoroughly interested his audience in his description of the city, particularly of the Institut Bibliographique and the important and immense work it is doing for bibliography. At the conclusion of the meeting a hearty vote of thanks was moved by Mr. H. Boughton, and seconded by Mr. S. Conroy, to Mr. Farr for his very interesting address.

NOTABLE PROFESSIONAL LITERATURE.

FOVARGUE, H. W. Summary of Library Law. 21 pp. 7 x 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. 1910. Stanley Russell & Co. 2s. 6d. net.

To the many students who must be studying for the 1911 L.A. Examinations the publication of this pamphlet, by the Honorary Solicitor to the Library Association, and the foremost authority on the subject of library legislation, is most opportune. As a summary it fulfils its purpose admirably, and forms an indispensable complement to the reference works

dealing with the subject. In the brief space at his disposal the author gives a series of succinct and clear notes on the adoption of the Act and the library authorities in the various districts; the amalgamation of library districts; institutions which may be provided; lands; expenses; accounts; the management and regulation of institutions provided; bye-laws; borrowers' tickets; offences in libraries; liability to rates and taxes; and appointment of officers. J.W.

STEPHEN, G. A. *Die Moderne Grossbuchbinderei: Eine Beschreibung der Herstellung von Bucheinbänden und der Dabei Verwendeten Maschinen. Übersetzt und für österreichische und deutsche Verhältnisse bearbeitet von Hermann Scheibe. Mit 138 Abbildungen. Wien und Leipzig. viii + 195 pp. 1910.*

On p. 154 of volume 7 of "The Library Assistant" the English edition of Mr. Stephen's now well-known book on "Commercial Bookbinding" was reviewed. It is not necessary here to repeat the good things that were then said about it, but we can say that the German edition in no way falls short of the English. Its value is in fact increased by the addition of a large number of illustrations, and we think the shape and size preferable to that of the original work, but this may be a matter of taste. From the translator's preface we learn that the work has supplied a long felt want in Germany, and the author is to be congratulated on the quality of a work which meets with such international approval. We look forward with pleasure to the publication of the manual of book-binding that is now in the press, written jointly by Mr. Stephen (a member of the Council of the L.A.A.) and our Honorary Secretary. H.E.

CORRESPONDENCE.

ENGLISH CATALOGUE OF BOOKS, 1801-36.

To the Editor of "The Library Assistant."

DEAR SIR,

I am, in conjunction with Mr. Quintin Waddington, preparing a volume of the English Catalogue of Books, which will cover the years 1801 to 1836. We are exceedingly anxious to include in this volume as many locally printed books and pamphlets as possible, and I wish to appeal to all library assistants to help us in this matter. We shall be very grateful for any lists of these books. I subjoin a specimen title to indicate the information required.

OVERTON (JOHN). *The Duty of Britons: a Sermon.* cr. 8vo
(Wilson and Spence: York). Mawman 63

The local publishers (not necessarily the printers) are given in brackets, followed by the name of the London publisher or agent.

St. Bride Foundation,

I am, etc.,

Bride Lane, E.C., December, 1910.

R. A. PEDDIE.

NOTE TO "THE IMPORTANCE OF PARISH REGISTERS."

We have received from Mr. Tapley-Soper, librarian of the Exeter Public Library, the Annual Report and Balance Sheet of the Devon and Cornwall Record Society, which is doing excellent work for these counties on the lines of Mr. Henderson's paper published in the December number of this Journal. Mr. Tapley-Soper is Honorary Secretary of the Society and is an ardent worker on its behalf. He points out a printer's error in Mr. Henderson's paper, page 274 of the Journal. The year 1853 should of course be 1538.

APPOINTMENTS AND CHANGES.

McCALL, MR. G. H., District Librarian of the Limehouse Public Library, is leaving the library profession to take up the duties of Fine Art Director of a large American firm of Art Publishers, at first in their Paris house, and afterwards in the United States.





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